

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

August 29, 2003

a. Position Description

The Task Force Communications Specialist is responsible for managing the communications system for the Task Force. The Communications Specialist reports directly to the Logistics Team Manager.

The Communications Specialist is responsible for:

- Developing the Communications Plan;
- Obtaining frequencies, installation, operation, and maintenance of the Task Force communications system during incident operations;
- Coordinating communications with other appropriate entities including the IST Communication Unit Leader;
- Adhering to all safety procedures;
- Providing accountability, maintenance, and repairs for all communications equipment;
- Maintaining appropriate records and reports;
- Performing additional tasks or duties as assigned during a mission;
- Maintaining the communications cache in an operational state at all times;
- Monitoring all Task Force communications; and
- Developing requests for ordering replacements for consumable items and items lost damaged or destroyed.

b. Position Requirements and Criteria:

Individuals who meet the following requirements and criteria will be eligible to become Communications Specialists in the DHS/FEMA US&R Response System. The intent of these requirements is to select personnel capable of managing the communications needs of the Task Force in the urban disaster environment. The requirements and criteria for the position are identified in the following categories:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities.

Knowledge:

The Communications Specialist must:

- Have practical knowledge of current telecommunications practices;

- Have a working knowledge of Task Force communications equipment including:
 - ◊ Installation
 - ◊ Operation
 - ◊ Power requirements
 - ◊ Frequency programming
 - ◊ Field troubleshooting;
- Have knowledge of incident communications planning and frequency management;
- Have knowledge of radio protocols and operational discipline;
- Have knowledge of amateur radio operations, land mobile radio, telephone, and satellite systems; and
- Complete the DHS/FEMA Communications Specialist Course.

Skills:

The Communications Specialist must:

- Effectively communicate within the Task Force and with other entities regarding communications issues;
- Be proficient in the use of computers and associated applications; and
- Be proficient in programming communications equipment.

Abilities:

The Communications Specialist must:

- Be able to anticipate and plan for Task Force communications needs;
- Be able to instruct Task Force members in the correct use of communications equipment while deployed in a disaster environment;
- Be able to work at heights to place antennas, repeaters, etc.; and
- Be able to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

c. Operational Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to define the duties and responsibilities of the Communications Specialist during a mission assignment. The list is intended to be a general summary of actions. It should be understood that:

- Some required actions may not be listed, but must be identified and assumed by this position;
- Some actions may be the primary responsibility of another Task Force position, but may require assistance and coordination from this position; and
- The actions are listed in a general chronological order, but may require deviation.

(1) Upon Activation/At Task Force Assembly Point:

- Set-up communications station at Task Force Assembly Point;
- Activate cellular telephones and pagers;
- Provide the Logistics Team Manager with contact numbers for the Task Force during the mission;
- Check all assigned communications equipment as appropriate;
- Issue communications equipment to appropriate Task Force personnel:
 - ◊ Identify the assigned frequencies;
 - ◊ Brief members on accountability, use, and care;
 - ◊ Ensure personnel are aware of the prohibition of the use of radios while on the aircraft; and
 - ◊ Program radios as needed;
- If not pre-assigned, obtain Task Force deployment frequencies;
- Coordinate with Logistics Specialist on priority loading of communication equipment; and
- Discuss the Task Force Communications Plan with the Logistics Team Manager and the TFL.

(2) At Point Of Departure:

- Assemble for a Task Force briefing from the TFL and appropriate officials;
- Assist with the movement and loading of equipment;
- Bring personal day pack, ear plugs, and warm clothes for flight; and
- Ensure that the battery is removed from portable radio prior to boarding aircraft.

(3) In Transit:

- Maintain communications with the EST;
- During ground transportation, maintain intra-Task Force communications.

(4) Arrival at Mobilization Center:

- Coordinate with the IST Communications Unit;
- Acquire tactical, command, and coordination communications frequencies from the IST if not already known and programmed; and
- Select and set up Task Force Communications Center within the BoO.

(5) On-Site Operations:

- Assess the local communication infrastructure;

- In the absence of an IST, establish communication link with the local jurisdiction;
- Brief Task Force personnel on the Task Force communications plan as directed;
- Identify other communications systems that could enhance operations (i.e., amateur radio, Civil Air Patrol, air reconnaissance, etc.);
- Coordinate with Logistics Specialist to ensure continuous fuel supply for generators;
- Monitor electrical and battery supply status and reorder as needed;
- Monitor Task Force communications for compliance with established procedures; and
- Tag and list defective equipment for follow-up repair.

(6) Reassignment/Demobilization:

- Maintain Task Force communications during return travel.
- Ensure that all communications equipment is properly cleaned, calibrated, and repackaged for transport. Report any re-supply needs to the Logistics Manager.
- Ensure the communication cache is returned to an operational state of readiness as soon as possible.
- Review the effectiveness of Task Force communication system and provide input for Task Force after-action meeting.